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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the Northeast Iowa Technical Institute (NITI) Needs Assessment Study was to examine the constituents and clients of NITI to determine whether the present mix of vocational-technical and adult education programs and services was optimal to meet the needs of the residents of Merged Area I. Particular attention was given to the question of whether NITI would best serve its constituents as a technical institute or community college. Surveys were conducted of: (1) high school students (N=3,285), requesting information on educational plans and influences, knowledge and opinions of NITI, and favorite programs and courses of study; (2) current NITI students (N=876), requesting information on interest in further education, programs of interest, and ratings of college programs and services; (3) former students (N=954), requesting information about feelings toward the quality of education they received at NITI, and their plans for continued education; (4) area business people (N=965) and major employers (N=16), asking about contact with NITI, training needs, use of educational attainment as a criterion for advancement and promtion, preferences with respect to time and location of classes, and ratings of NITI programs and services; (5) business/labor professionals serving on NITI program advisory committees (N=327), requesting information about familiarity with NITI, assessment of NITI facilities and services, and the community college question; (6) area householders and taxpayers (N=7,992), requesting information on knowledge and assessment of NITI, attitudes toward the continuance of courses in local communities, and the need for a community college; and (7) current NITI staff (N=204), requesting information on knowledge, program needs, and attitudes toward the possible community college status of NITI. This executive summary highlights major findings from each survey and reviews resulting recommendations. (EJV)

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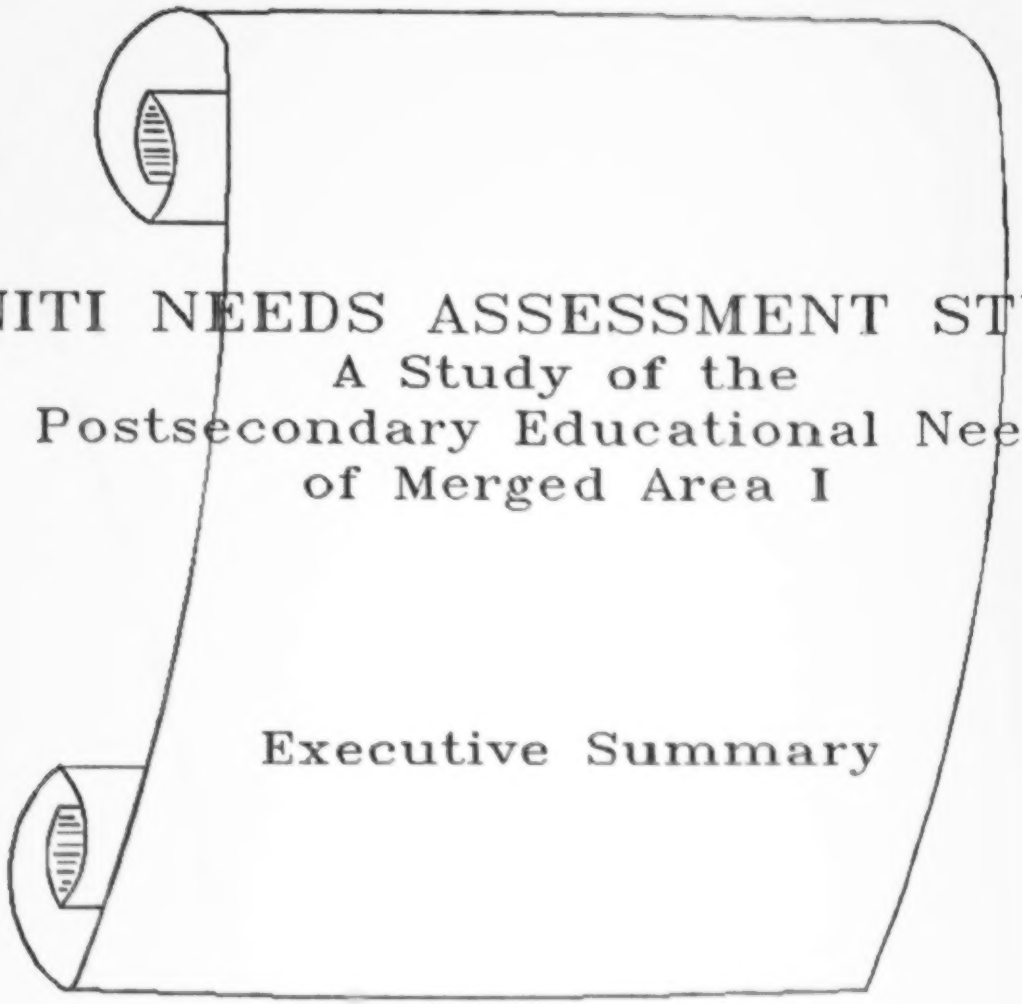

NITI NEEDS ASSESSMENT STUDY

A Study of the Postsecondary Educational Needs of Merged Area I

Executive Summary

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October 30, 1987

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
NITI NEEDS ASSESSMENT STUDY

I. Introduction 1

II. The High School Senior Survey 4

III. The Current NITI Student Survey 7

IV. The NITI Alumni Survey 9

V. The Area Business Survey 12

VI. The Advisory Committee Survey 14

VII. The Area Household Survey 16

VIII. The NITI Staff Survey 20

IX. Conclusions 24

X. Recommendations 25

I. Introduction

The purpose of the NITI Needs Assessment Study was to examine the constituents and clients of Northeast Iowa Technical Institute to determine if the present mix of vocational-technical and adult education programs and services is optimal meet the needs of the residents of Merged Area I. Particular attention was given to the question of whether NITI would best serve its constituent communities as a vocational-technical institute or as a community college. Increased pressures on the college from the crisis in the Iowa economy, shifting enrollment patterns and the intensified competition among college graduates for jobs make important for the college to assess its educational impact. The impact of the college may affect a variety of individuals and groups:

* future students, current students, and former students;
* area businesses, major employers, and the business / labor / professional leaders serving on NITI program advisory committees;
* area householders and taxpayers;
* current NITI staff;

Thus, the NITI Needs Assessment Study conducted by Iowa State University investigated these groups' awareness and use of NITI programs and services, the extent to which NITI is meeting the needs of these groups, and the extent of any unmet needs. Particular attention was given to the potential need for additional general education within the curriculum and the local demand for arts and sciences subjects as an integral part of the NITI mix of programs and services. A series of specific questions were posed to each constituent group regarding the value of a public comprehensive community college for Merged Area

I. Each question addressed a different and historically distinct role served by a community college. Fifty recommendations are included for the seven areas addressed by the study.

NITI is a community-based, performance-oriented institution. Consequently, it involved its constituents, internal and external to the institution, during the needs assessment process. Such involvement not only provided valuable advice but also garnered support and enhanced community understanding of the institution. Two groups were involved in the Needs Assessment Study: the NITI Study Team and the NITI Needs Assessment Advisory Committee. The NITI Needs Assessment Study Team was comprised of NITI administrators, student services personnel, faculty and students. The role of the Study Team was to review and advise the project director of the validity and reliability of the needs assessment instruments and procedures, based on their working knowledge of the college environment. The NITI Needs Assessment Advisory Committee consisted of business, labor, civic and educational leaders drawn from throughout the Merged Area I District. The Acting Superintendent/President and the administrative council selected the Needs Assessment Advisory Committee. Except for the Acting Superintendent/President, who chaired the group ex officio, and the project director, this Advisory Committee group consisted of community leaders from outside the institution. The role of the Advisory Committee was to review and advise the project director of the validity and reliability of the needs assessments instruments and procedures, based on their working knowledge of the business, civic, and educational communities and institutions within Merged Area I. Each questionnaire used in the study and each procedure used was first reviewed by the internal NITI Study Team. Once the revisions and editing suggested by the Study Team had been incorporated, the questionnaires and

procedures were then reviewed and edited by the NITI Advisory Committee. Through this two step process, each question and each method used in the Needs Assessment Study was evaluated for fairness, accuracy and appropriateness.

The following sampling techniques were used in surveying the corresponding NITI constituent groups:

Population	Technique	Number	Return	Rate
- High school seniors	Total population	3,285	2,571	82.9%
- NITI students	Total population	876	685	78.2%
- NITI alumni	10% random sample	954	307	32.2%
- Area householders	10% random sample	7,992	2,570	32.2%
- Area business people	10% random sample	965	217	22.5%
- Major employers	Selective, interviews	16	16	all
- NITI program advisory committees	Total population	327	217	66.4%
- NITI staff	Total population	204	180	88.2%

The purpose of the study was to determine the present and future needs of the constituents of Northeast Iowa Technical Institute. It was assumed that survey respondents gave their opinions honestly and accurately, and that they were not unduly influenced by any major events occurring during March and April 1987, when the surveys were completed. In the few instances when survey responses were received which did not conform to these assumptions, they were omitted from the study and were so noted in this report.

The findings reported here indicate the need for certain types of postsecondary educational programs, services and activities. It was beyond the scope of this study to determine how best to provide these services or the financial efficacy of providing such services. In essence, the NITI Needs Assessment Study was not a feasibility investigation, and therefore, the Board

of Directors of Northeast Iowa Technical Institute is advised to commission financial feasibility studies for all major programmatic or service changes it may choose to adopt as a result of this study.

II. The High School Senior Survey

Out-migration of high school seniors is a problem within Merged Area I. Eighty-five percent (85%) plan to leave the area to continue their education. In some high schools, greater college counseling and guidance is needed, since the proportion of those not planning to go to college is unusually high. The independent colleges and universities in Merged Area I can attract a greater proportion of those students planning to go to a liberal arts college, since more than half of those seniors seeking a liberal arts college choose one within the area. NITI can attract a greater proportion of those students planning to attend a two-year college, since 3 out of 4 high school seniors with such plans will now choose NITI. The problem of out-migration can be reduced through increased information about college programs and services within Merged Area I, and with a program / service mix which is attractive to the students of the area.

The majority of high school seniors who go on to college will attend full-time (83%) and will be day-time students (97.6%). A large majority (83.6%) of students planning to attend college indicated they need financial aid in order to enroll in the college of their choice. Also, 83.2 percent of those seniors plan to work while in college in order to defray some of the expenses.

Financial aid information and part-time work opportunities should be a regular part of the information provided seniors about NITI programs, services and opportunities.

Most of the graduating seniors plan to continue their education beyond high school (85%). A majority of the seniors felt that their parents either encouraged, expected or required them to go to college. Among those not planning to go to college or who were undecided were three groups who traditionally might be better served by a community college. They were those who were uncertain about what type of educational program (vocational or arts and sciences) would be best for them (25%), those who earned poor grades in high school (5%), and those whose financial situation inhibited their ability to attend college (24%). The High School Senior Survey showed that there were substantial numbers of these students who may benefit from and be interested in attending a community college in the area; these are students who otherwise would not further their education beyond high school.

The High School Survey data showed that students who plan to enroll in liberal arts college inside or outside Merged Area I, or plan to attend a public university, were significantly different and distinct from those who choose to attend a community college or vocational technical institute. Those planning to enter college immediately after graduation, the majority of whom were enrolled in a college preparatory program and earned B or better grades, chose a public university or a liberal arts college to attend. Those who were undecided or unable to attend college, those who earned less than a B average, and those who enrolled in a high school agriculture, business or commercial, general or trades and technical curriculum were interested or planning to enroll in either a community college or a vocational technical institute. Fewer than 15 percent of

those considering a liberal arts college would choose to attend a community college, and they would choose a community college only as a "backup" selection, if unable to attend their preferred college or university.

Most high school seniors (78.8%) knew little about the atmosphere, programs and services available at NITI. Many thought (68.1%), for example, that NITI offered curriculum that would enable them to transfer to a university after two years of study. Specific high schools were identified where the seniors' knowledge of NITI programs, services and learning environment were shown to be particularly low.

When those seniors planning to attend some two-year college were asked if they would be more likely to enroll at NITI if housing were available next to campus, half (50.0%) indicated that they would. Housing information should be provided as a regular part of the NITI information package given to high school seniors and high school counselors. The college should assess further the demand for nearby student housing.

Respondents to the High School Survey were asked which programs and subjects they would prefer to study. They made their choices from three lists: 1) current NITI programs, 2) career option programs of Iowa community colleges, and 3) common B.S./B.A. subjects offered at the freshman and sophomore levels by Iowa community colleges. Student planning to attend NITI, planning to attend a vocational technical institute, and planning to attend a community college all indicated interest in selected and specific career option programs and B.S./B.A. subjects. Given the large out-migration of students planning to attend a two-year college, it would appear that certain transfer-oriented subjects and career option programs should be seriously considered for inclusion in the NITI curriculum. Through a combined effort of increased information to high school seniors, their parents, and high school teachers and counselors and the

inclusion of selected career option and B.S./B.A. subjects, NITI should attract a greater proportion of those students planning to attend a two-year college.

III. The Current NITI Student Survey

Seven hundred thirty-one day students were surveyed on the Calmar (314) and Peosta (417) campuses of Northeast Iowa Technical Institute. Their responses provided valuable information regarding the desirability of altering the program/service mix at the college and of changing the status of NITI to that of a comprehensive community college. The distribution of respondents between campuses was not significant, except where otherwise noted. Two-thirds of the students surveyed were women (63.6%); otherwise, the demographic distribution of students was not considered significantly different from the area as a whole.

Many (43.4%) current NITI students are interested in continuing their education beyond the program in which they are enrolled. Of those wishing to continue their education, over half (51.7%) would study another subject currently offered by NITI, nearly one quarter (24.4%) would study a subject leading to a bachelors degree, and over one-fifth of the respondents (21.6 %) would continue their education by studying a career option program. The programs and subjects chosen parallel those selected by the high school seniors planning to enroll in a two-year college.

Because substantial number of NITI students are interested in certain bachelors degree subjects and career option programs, transferability of NITI coursework to a four-year college or university is important to a majority of students. Over one-third of the current NITI students (36.8%) considered transferability of courses "essential," while another third (37.9%) considered

it "a valuable option." It was concluded that if some NITI courses and programs were transferable, probably the percentage of students planning to continue their education beyond their current program of study (43.4%) would also rise.

Based on the findings of this survey and that from the High School Senior Survey, specific steps were recommended for curricular planning. Nine NITI programs were identified as areas of interest for future study among the current student population: Accounting specialist, Auto body repair; Auto mechanics; Bookkeeping / accounting; Carpentry; Computer technology; Diesel mechanics; Medical records technology; Word processing. Three bachelors degree subjects were identified as areas of further interest among current students and high school seniors: Computer and Information Sciences; Education; Psychology. Two career option programs appeared to hold common appeal to both current students and those seniors planning to attend a two-year college: Business and Management and General Business.

Current NITI students generally gave high ratings to the academic, admissions and registration and counseling services they received while enrolled as students. Utilization of these services, however, was low in certain areas: academic advising (26.1% use), college orientation (22.8%), NITI libraries (13%). Less than 8.6 percent of students report having received college information prior to enrolling, and less than 12 percent indicated that had used the college catalog and admissions publications. Similarly, less than one-fifth of students reported receiving financial aid information, despite the fact that a majority of high school seniors said they would need financial aid in order to attend college. These findings, together with those of the High School Survey, suggest that college admissions information and counseling are not reaching students.

In general, current NITI students are satisfied with the procedures and services of the college. They think the college personnel cares about them as individuals and provides them with a variety of campus activities in which to become involved. They think NITI should become a community college, and that a number of individuals not currently attending college would enroll if NITI were a community college.

IV. The NITI Alumni Survey

One thousand NITI alumni, a ten percent random sample, were surveyed regarding their perception of the quality of education they received while a student at NITI, whether they planned to continue their education and whether they did, and what their opinions were regarding NITI as a community college. Their responses provided valuable information regarding the desirability of altering the program/service mix at the college and of changing the status of NITI to that of a comprehensive community college. Due to the nature of the Alumni name list from which the surveyed was conducting, only limited information was available to determine the representativeness of the sample. For example, since little was known about the geographic distribution of the Alumni, the representativeness of the sample could not be checked according to geographic distribution. The demographic distribution of alumni was assumed therefore to be comparable to the population from which it was drawn.

Many (43.4%) NITI alumni were interested in continuing their education beyond the program in which they were enrolled. Of those wishing to continue their education, over half (50.8%) would study another subject currently offered by NITI, over one-fifth (22.6%) would study a subject leading to a bachelors

degree, and over one-quarter of the respondents (26.6 %) would continue their education by studying a career option program. The programs and subjects chosen parallel those selected by the high school seniors planning to enroll in a two-year college.

Because substantial number of NITI alumni are interested in certain bachelors degree subjects and career option programs, transferability of NITI coursework to a four-year college or university is important to a majority of alumni. Nearly one-third of the NITI alumni (27.4%) considered transferability of courses "essential," while another third (33.2%) considered "a valuable option." It was concluded that if some NITI courses and programs had been transferable, probably the percentage of alumni who did continue their education (13.4%) would have been significantly greater. It was concluded that a substantial number of Alumni were interested in B.S./B.A. subjects and/or Career Option programs, but their degrees, diplomas and certificates earned at NITI inhibited many from continuing their education as desired.

Based on the findings of this survey and that from the High School Senior Survey and Current NITI Student Survey, specific steps were recommended for curricular planning. Ten NITI programs commanded high interest among the responding NITI Alumni: Accounting Specialist, Associate Degree Nursing, Bookkeeping / Accounting, Business Computer Programming, Computer Operation and Programming, Electronic Technology, Mechanical Technology, Respiratory Therapy Technician, and Word Processing. Four B.A./B.S. subjects areas were of high interest to the responding NITI Alumni: Computer and Information Sciences, Engineering, Health Professions, and Psychology. There were Career Option programs in high demand among the Alumni surveyed: Business and Management, Child Care Management, Computer-aided Drafting and Design, Legal Assisting and Legal Secretarial. Many of the B.A./B.S. subjects and Career Option programs

selected by a high proportion of Alumni where the preferred choices of the high school seniors planning to attend a two-year college and the current NITI students as well. The stability of interest in these program areas from future students, to present students, to Alumni suggests the strength of these specific B.S./B.A. subjects and Career Option programs. The findings of the Alumni Survey further reinforce the candidacy of these programs for inclusion in the NITI curriculum. Such inclusion presupposes community college status for the institution.

NITI alumni generally gave high ratings to the academic, admissions and registration and counseling services they received while enrolled at NITI. Utilization of these services, however, was low in certain areas: college orientation (19.2%), NITI libraries (14.7%). More alumni (36.5%) received financial aid information than had the current NITI students (17.2%); more alumni (43.3%) used the financial counseling services at NITI than current NITI students (17.2%). These figures suggest that effort to provide students while financial aid information and counseling may be declining, while the high school seniors are seeking such assistance (see High School Survey).

In general, NITI alumni are satisfied with the procedures and services of the institution. They think the college personnel cared about them as individuals and provided them with a variety of campus activities in which to become involved. They think NITI should become a community college, and that a number of individuals not currently attending college would enroll if NITI were a community college.

V. The Area Business Survey

Two hundred seventeen responses were received from the 965 establishments sent the Area Business Survey. Given that slightly less than half claimed that they had little or no contact with NITI (41.3%), the response rate was not atypical of mail surveys of populations with low vested interest in the subject of the questionnaire. The purpose of the questionnaire was to gather information on the education and training needs of area business people, their attitude toward the use of NITI programs and services, and their opinion regarding the prospect of NITI changing its mission to that of a community college.

Approximately one-third of area businesses (35.5%) have difficulty finding qualified employees within the area. Slightly less than half (43.8%) reported having to look for some personnel in other than the immediate community within which they are located. The types of occupations for which employers had difficulty finding qualified employees corresponded to a large degree with those arts and science and career option subjects in which high school seniors, current NITI students and Alumni had indicated an interest: Accounting, Education, Engineering, Health Care Professions, Sales and Customer Relations, and Secretarial / Clerical.

Approximately one-third of area business people used educational attainment as a stated criteria for advancement and promotions. While many of these recognized continuing education units (CEU's), college credit, GED or high school completion, and postsecondary vocational certificates, fewer employers recognized the associate degree as a mark of educational achievement. Also, employers were less willing to support an employee's study toward an associate degree. It was concluded that greater effort needs to be made to explain and advance the value of the associate degree to area business people. As the

American Association for Community and Junior Colleges has found nationally, employers frequently fail to give recognition for completion of the associate degree, even though it may entail greater levels of education than a vocational certificate.

The results of this survey, like the preceding surveys, suggested that sizable proportions of the population have limited contact with and knowledge of NITI programs and services. College public relations officers and those working with business and industry need to make greater effort to explain the range of services provided by the college and to promote greater understanding of the opportunities it offers. Those area business reporting familiarity with or use of NITI programs indicated a high degree of satisfaction. If that familiarity with programs and services was extended to a greater proportion of area businesses, the utilization of and support for NITI probably would also rise.

Respondents to the Area Business Survey indicated a preference for time, day, and location of classes and training sessions provided by NITI. Area business people prefer classes offered on campus. Roughly equal preference was given to classes during the day and evening. Preferred daytime schedules were Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays, starting at 8:00 am or 9:00 am and 5:00 pm. Some interest was also indicated in Saturday morning and Sunday evening classes. Nighttime schedule preferences were for Monday through Thursday classes starting at 7:00 pm.

Respondents who were familiar with NITI (58.7%), gave positive ratings of its contribution to the area. About one-fifth (17.4%) of the respondents felt NITI was "making a serious effort to help us," while 35.3 percent indicated that "what has been done for us has been generally good." Most respondents believed that the area would benefit from a community college. They saw a community college as a haven for those caught in the gap between high school performance

and rising admissions requirements and tougher academic standards in the state. They agreed with statements indicating that a community college would be attractive to those who wished to work part-time and attend school, or conversely, those who wished to study part-time and work full-time. They were uncertain as to whether there were ample higher education opportunities in the area.

The results of the Area Business Survey support the conclusion that greater contact and information is needed between NITI and its constituents. Also, certain subjects and programs should be considered for inclusion in the curriculum, based on the findings of this Survey and the High School, Current Student, and Alumni Surveys. These subjects are career option and applied science subjects. The need for community college status is indicated in the type of employees recruited from outside the area, the subjects desired, and the opinions rendered by area business people.

VI. The Advisory Committee Survey

The members of thirty-three NITI program advisory committees were surveyed. These are citizens of Merged Area I who have been selected for their expertise and experience to provide advice and counsel to a specific NITI program. Of the 327 individuals surveyed, 217 provided usable responses; this represented a 66.4% response rate for the NITI Advisory Committee Survey.

While two-thirds of NITI students and alumni are female, two-thirds of the program advisory committee members are male (67.3%). The majority of advisory committee members own their home and have 3 to 5 persons in their household. This suggests that advisory committee members should regularly receive both

general college and specific program information across the NITI curriculum -- not only to assist them in better understanding of the institution they are advising -- but also because their households are potential sources of future NITI students. These are individuals who have a generally positive view on NITI programs and services, a large majority of whom report a moderate to great knowledge of NITI programs and services, yet no more than 13 percent of whom report having enrolled in a course.

Two-thirds (62.6%) of the advisory committee members thought they knew about NITI programs and services, and their opinions of that program / service mix were largely favorable. Advisory committee members felt that NITI was achieving its philosophy in regard to six institutional goals, as well as in relation to accountability of programs, services and staff. Respondents recommended the continuance of offering courses in local communities (89.4%), although only thirteen percent (13.4%) reported that they personally had ever enrolled in these courses. As in the other surveys, the findings of the Advisory Committee Survey suggest that more needs to be done to arrange for and publicize student housing adjacent to the campuses; this need was seen to be slightly strongly at the Calmar campus.

In the view of the advisory committee members, NITI facilities and services are quite good. They feel particularly positive about the quality of the classroom facilities (93.2%), that the students feel safe on the NITI campuses (83.7%), and that the general condition of the physical plant was good (97.8%). Eighty-four percent (83.7%) think that NITI's faculty are genuinely concerned with students as individuals. Respondents to the Advisory Committee Survey are less certain that instructors are evaluated regularly and fairly, and whether the health service and student health insurance programs are full satisfactory.

The clear majority of advisory committee members think there is a need for a community college in Merged Area I. Seventy-six percent (76.0%) agreed that a community college would be the college of first choice among a number of people. Less, but still nearly two-thirds (63.1%), thought it would be a place for those who were not able to go to the college of their choice. Advisory committee members thought that rising admissions standards (59.9%) and tougher academic requirements (88.3%) at the universities made a community college in Merged Area I valuable. While half (52.6%) thought a community college would be attractive to the unemployed, sixty-nine percent (69.0%) thought that a community college would be beneficial for those who needed a part-time job to support the costs of going to college, and seventy-eight (77.9%) thought that a community college would be the choice of those who wished to work full-time and attend school part-time. Respondents were uncertain as to whether there are sufficient opportunities in the area for those who want to go to college, and seventy-eight percent (78.4%) disagreed with the statement that people in the area would not go to a community college. Advisory committee members appear to recommend a community college that expands and enhances the existing NITI programs, while providing transferability of coursework in selected subject areas.

VII. The Area Household Survey

A ten percent random sample of residents of Merged Area I were surveyed. These are citizens of Merged Area I consist both the taxpayers who in part support the operation of NITI and the population from which adult students come

to NITI campuses and local community centers for courses, programs and activities. Of the 7,992 individuals surveyed, 2,570 provided usable responses; this represented a 32.2% response rate for the NITI Area Household Survey.

Slightly higher response rates occurred in the urban centers of Dubuque and Decorah than in the district as a whole. High response rates were received from the over 45 years age category than was representative of the population (U.S. Census of the Population, 1985). Due to these weighings, data was analyzed as a whole, rather than by county or city. A majority of the respondents to the Area Household Survey own their home and have 2 persons or more in their household. As was the case in other surveys reported, those residents who were familiar with NITI's mix of programs and services gave the institution moderately high approval ratings, but many of the respondents reported that they were unfamiliar with many of the activities of the college. This suggests that Area residents should continue to regularly receive boxholder mailers and flyers from the college, and that those publications should contain both general college and specific program information across the NITI curriculum -- not only to assist them in better understanding of the institution they are supporting -- but also because their households are potential sources of future NITI students. Such information could constitute a page or more in the circular listing Adult and Continuing Education offerings. These are individuals who have a generally positive view on NITI programs and services, a large majority of whom report a moderate to great knowledge of NITI programs and services, yet no more than 13 percent of whom report having enrolled in a course.

Only one-third (33.3%) of the Area residents thought they knew about NITI programs and services, and their opinions of that program / service mix was largely favorable. Area residents felt that NITI was achieving its philosophy in regard to six institutional goals, as well as in relation to accountability of

programs, services and staff. Respondents were most familiar with NITI's goal to provide job entry skills in vocational and technical subjects (59.9%), but showed little knowledge of personal enrichment adult education courses (50.4% marked "Don't Know"), services to students with disabilities (68.3% marked "Don't Know", and efforts to make college staff and programs accountable (56.3% marked "Don't Know"). These results suggest that public information and public relations efforts need to be exerted to better explain NITI's role in providing their services and in holding itself accountable to the public. Through such efforts, the public will not only gain enhanced understanding of the range of services available at NITI, but also will be prepared to identify and refer individuals to NITI who are seeking such assistance.

Respondents recommended the continuance of offering courses in local communities (78.2%), although only seven percent (6.9%) reported that they personally had ever enrolled in these courses. It would appear from these data that, while there is moderately widespread support of courses, programs and services in the local communities of Merged Area I, there are a small proportion of the population availing themselves of these offerings. Since the public is generally favorable to NITI's provision of adult education in local communities, these data suggest that a greater proportion of the population could be served through these offerings. Further investigation is needed to determine if the specific program/service mix (See Tables VII-5a/b) correspond to current offerings. Also, further investigation is needed to determine ways in which the participation in these courses, programs and services can be broadened. Since the principle focus of these courses are the small rural towns of Merged Area I, it is recommended that ad hoc advisory committees be established in each community served to explore ways to broaden the participation in adult and continuing education programs beyond the seven percent reported here.

As in the other surveys, the findings of the Area Household Survey suggest that more needs to be done to arrange for and publicize student housing adjacent to the campuses. In the view of the Area residents, NITI facilities and services are general favorable. They feel particularly positive about the general condition of the campus (composite rating = 4.26 on a 5 point scale). Area residents were uncertain that students not living near Peosta or Calmar could find housing near the campuses (composite rating = 2.99), were uncertain that NITI provides cultural programs and activities in local communities (composite rating = 3.34), and were uncertain that the health service and health insurance programs for students were adequate (composite rating = 3.32).

The clear majority of Area residents think there is a need for a community college in Merged Area I. Sixty-four percent (63.7%) agreed that a community college would be the college of first choice among a number of people. Even more (69.5%), thought it would be a place for those who were not able to go to the college of their choice. Area residents thought that rising admissions standards (61.8%) and tougher academic requirements (79.0%) at the universities made a community college in Merged Area I valuable. While respondents were uncertain as to whether a community college would be an attractive option to the unemployed, sixty-five percent (65.0%) thought that a community college would be beneficial for those who needed a part-time job to support the costs of going to college, and seventy-eight (72.4%) thought that a community college would be the choice of those who wished to work full-time and attend school part-time. These views not only parallel the response of the other groups surveyed, but also confirm the finding in the High School Senior Survey that such students are planning to attend a two-year college next fall.

Respondents were uncertain as to whether there are sufficient opportunities in the area for those who want to go to college, and seventy-eight percent (71.3%) disagreed with the statement that people in the area would not go to a community college. Area residents appear to recommend a community college that expands and enhances the existing NITI programs, while providing transferability of coursework in selected subject areas.

VIII. The NITI Staff Survey

The NITI Professional and Support Staff Survey was administered to 204 staff during April and May 1987. After the initial mailing and a follow-up to non-respondents, 180 usable returns were received, resulting in a return rate of 88.2 percent. The overwhelming majority of staff had worked at NITI for 6 years or more (70.6%) and were employed full-time by the institution (77.7%). Thus, the respondents had a substantial and prolonged experience with NITI. It was noted that engender some bias, since staff have a vested interest in the operations and success of the institution. However, as a group, the Staff have daily exposure to NITI programs and services, and that experience spans a significant number of years in most cases.

Survey respondents were asked to rate the support services for students, the instructional programs, and how well they thought the institution was serving various groups. Consistently, a significant proportion of staff -- from one-quarter to one-third -- indicated that they did not know the quality of the support services, the instructional programs, or how well the institution was serving a particular target group. Significant proportions of staff didn't know about the accuracy of information provided to students prior to enrolling

(31.8%), the adequacy of general admissions procedures (25.9%), the student billing and payment procedures (34.1%), the quality of counseling services (22.4%), student career planning (24.1%), community cultural programming (31.8%), availability of student employment (25.9%), veterans services (47.6%), availability of counselors to students (28.8%). Many staff also claimed they didn't know about the availability of housing near campus for students (24.1%), the financial aid counseling (27.1%), work study opportunities (24.1%), financial aid information (29.4%) or financial aid awards (35.3%). It was noted that financial aid and work-study opportunities were important to the high school seniors and current NITI students, and staff should be prepared to converse with students about NITI services in those areas.

Significant proportions of professional and support staff also claimed lack of knowledge about student health services (40.6%) and student health insurance (61.2%). When asked to rate specific NITI instructional programs, many staff indicated that they didn't know enough about the program to rate it. When asked how well NITI serves various groups, an average of 34.3 percent of the staff indicated that they did not know. Particularly high proportions of staff did not know how well NITI served labor unions and professional groups (53.9%) and developmental studies students (53.3%).

Specific action is needed to improve staff knowledge of and understanding of NITI programs and services. Such knowledge is important to taking pride in the work environment. Also, two-year colleges traditionally attract those student groups least likely to persist to their educational goals. Students who have family responsibilities which interfere with continuing their education. Students with limited finances. Students with academic deficiencies. Students who are undecided about what career or academic goals they aspire to. These students do not persist well in a bureaucratic environment where only one office

knows the answer to specific questions. Successful student retention programs are built upon staff understanding of the instructional programs and key support services that the college offers and staff willingness to help students find immediate solutions to problems. In successful retention programs, maintenance, secretarial, instructional and counseling staff share the responsibility of understanding college services and helping students find and use those services. The findings of the Staff Survey indicate that improved understanding and communication between organizational units and individuals at NITI is needed.

The staff who were familiar with the services, programs and clientele of the institution generally gave positive ratings. Neutral ratings were given to cultural programming for the community, availability of counselors, the adequacy of the student center, bookstore, student housing, campus security and places for students to relax between classes. Neutral ratings were also given to student health services, student health insurance, parking and food service.

Professional and support staff recommended that the programs in Information Processing Technician, Electronic Technology, Computer Technology, Business Computer Programming and Agri-Business Technology be expanded or enhanced. They endorsed the addition of programs in Medical Record Technology, Medical Coder Transcriptionist, Electronic Technology and Computer Technology. They advocated the elimination or curtailment of programs in Agri-Business Technology, Dairy Herd Management, Dental Assisting, and Welding. It was noted that the staff were quite divided as to the merits and future of Agri-Business Technology; some strongly recommended its enhancement, while others, its elimination. Programs receiving lowest composite ratings were: Agri-Business Technology, Dairy Herd Management, Dye Design, Farm Implement Mechanics, General Machinist, Plastic Mold Design, Tool Design, and Welding.

Staff recommended the inclusion of certain B.A./B.S. subject areas, including Computer and Information Sciences, English, Math, and Writing. The inclusion of these basic skill undergraduate subjects suggested the need for a more substantial and cohesive general education curriculum, plus a transferable program in computer-related subjects. Staff recommended the inclusion of 14 Career Option Programs: Aviation / airport management, Business and management, Child care management, Commercial art, Communications media technology, Computer-aided drafting, Environmental control technology, Horticulture, Legal assisting, Legal secretary, Medical secretary, and Radio television broadcasting. Staff tended to recommend the strengthening and addition of business-related, computer-related and health professions curricula. Staff tended to recommend the curtailment of specific certificate or diploma vocational programs and to recommend the enhancement, enrichment and development of specific Career Option Programs. Staff indicated that the vocational technical programs should remain as the core of NITI's educational endeavors, but that transferable career option programs in business, computer and health professions fields should be developed.

NITI Staff thought that community college status would benefit a number of students in Merged Area I, particularly those affected by rising admissions criteria and tougher academic standards at universities, those who desire to work full-time and go to college part-time, those who want to work part-time and attend college full-time, and those who are currently unemployed. That a community college is within driving distance of work and home and that it may be the least expensive form of higher education were also seen as important factors. NITI staff do not think there are sufficient college educational opportunities in Merged Area I and they disagree with the notion that students would not go to a community college. The results of the NITI Professional and

Support Staff survey indicate that a primarily vocational technical curriculum, transferability of specific programs and therefore, community college status are urged.

IX. Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to determine the present mix of programs and services at Northeast Iowa Technical Institute is optimal in meeting the needs of constituent groups in Merged Area I. This Study provided information needed for the Board, Administration, Faculty and Staff to set goals and directions for the future. Two major conclusions of the study are:

Substantial and significant segments of each group surveyed were lacking adequate information about the services provided, the courses and programs offered and the constituents served by Northeast Iowa Technical Institute. To better meet the educational needs of Merged Area One, the Board of Trustees should make internal and external communication, cooperation and information a singular priority.

Substantial and significant segments of each group surveyed were not served due to the limitations of NITI as a technical institute. To better meet the educational needs of Merged Area I, the NITI Board of Trustees should expand the mission statement to authorize all functions of a public comprehensive community college, as defined by Iowa statute.

Prompt action is needed to stem the outflow of those individuals from Merged Area I who a seeking the educational benefits of that a two-year college offers. An institutional plan is needed to implement the major conclusions of this Study. The following recommendations are made for the development of such a plan:

X. Recommendations

1. NITI should develop information, guidance and admissions practices directed specifically toward the needs of those high school seniors planning to attend a two-year college. The specific programs, services and needs of those students leaving Merged Area I to attend another two-year college should be targeted in this effort.

2. NITI should develop information, guidance and admissions practices directed specifically at the three underserved groups of high school seniors identified: a) those who are undecided, b) those who have perceived financial limitations inhibiting their college plans, and c) those who view their high school academic performance as a limitation to furthering their education.

3. NITI should develop an active program to encourage students to continue their education, where appropriate to student goals and abilities.

4. Students should be encouraged not to view their diploma, certificate or degree program as terminal education. A plan should be developed whereby students from one program area can select and explore related areas of study.

5. A curriculum study committee should examine high demand programs (see curriculum section) to determine the feasibility of enhancing their content so that they might serve as Career Option programs.

6. Faculty and instructional leaders in high demand NITI programs should visit and confer with their counterparts in nearby colleges and universities in order to determine what substance, method and purpose can be given to selected courses in order to prepare and enable students to transfer into related four-year programs of study.

7. Subjects such as Foreign Language, Music and Psychology may be majors beyond the scope and direction of NITI's curriculum. Nevertheless, there are substantial numbers of current NITI students indicating an interest in these subjects. Plans to articulate these subjects to nearby four-year colleges and universities should be developed.

8. Faculty and instructional leaders should visit and confer with counterparts at nearby colleges and universities.

9. NITI should transfer the current Alumni mailing lists to a comprehensive database program where accurate records regarding graduates interests and employment can be continuously updated.

10. NITI should develop a plan for regularly informing alumni residing within Area I of program and course offerings.

11. NITI should endeavor to involve alumni in student orientation and campus open-house activities.

12. NITI Advisory Committee members should receive regular information on programs and services, not just literature pertinent to the program they advise.

13. NITI should develop a plan to broaden the participation in adult and continuing education courses, programs and activities.

14. A informational packet or video-tape on financial assistance, financial aid counseling, work-study and part-time employment opportunities should be developed and distributed to graduating seniors in area high schools.

15. NITI admissions counselors should make discussion of financial assistance, financial aid counseling, work-study and part-time employment opportunities a regular part of their conversations with high school students and counselors.

16. Accurate information on the cost of attending NITI should be developed, including information on the money saved by living at home while attending college. Comparable information should be developed on the cost of attending college part-time while working. This information should be distributed to prospective students.

17. The distribution of the NITI catalog and admissions literature should be re-evaluated in order to determine ways to get such information in the hands of a greater proportion of students planning to attend the institution.

18. NITI should include information on community, social and cultural activities with general college literature. NITI should work cooperatively with the sites housing local community programming to insure that the general public is aware of NITI's sponsorship of the program, service or activity.

19. NITI programs offered in local communities should be publicized to students and staff on-campus so that both have a better understanding and appreciation for the extent of services provided by the institution.

20. A literacy task force should be established to examine the reading, writing, and listening skills requirements of courses on campus. The literacy project by Richardson et al. (1983) can provide procedures and information collection instruments for the task force. The goal should be to identify and assess the expectations placed on students to read, write, speak, compute and analyze in their NITI programs of study.

21. A task force should be appointed to investigate the college orientation program. This task force should be charged with the responsibility of recommending ways to increase student participation in orientation activities and/or alternate ways to orient students to NITI programs and services. A secondary responsibility of this task force should be to identify ways in which the orientation program may function effectively as part of a college-wide retention effort. A third responsibility of the task force should be to evaluate the role alumni may play (as role models) in an orientation program.

22. A study committee should be established to determine the nature and extent of dissatisfaction with student health service and student health insurance.

23. An ongoing Student Health Advisory Committee (SHAC), composed of faculty, students, and staff, should be convened to provide input and oversight to the student health services and activities.

24. The college should assess further the demand for nearby student housing to determine if current private housing arrangements are meeting the needs of students. In the future, a tenant-landlord-college committee should be established to encourage communication between the groups.

25. Housing information should be provided as a regular part of the NITI information package given to high school seniors and high school counselors.

26. Available student housing information should be circulated among the NITI staff so that when they encounter students having difficulty locating housing, they have a ready resource with which to assist them.

27. NITI should develop and implement a plan to review with area business people how they use educational criteria for advancement, promotion and pay.

28. NITI should develop and implement a plan to advance public understanding of the Associate of Applied Science and Associate of Applied Arts degrees. Distinguished alumni should be recognized as holders of the A.A.S. or A.A.A. degree. Those NITI staff working with employers of the area should make a regular and concerted effort to determine if employers understand the differences in educational attainment between diploma, certificate and associate degree graduates of NITI.

29. NITI should develop a specific public information and awareness campaign, utilizing not only local media, but also campuses open-houses, tours, faculty exchanges with business and industry counterparts, and special awareness programs for area business people.

30. Public statements about NITI's role among the higher education institutions of Merged Area I should emphasize the potential for cooperation and collaboration, rather than competition. That NITI offers a unique curriculum and attracts students who would otherwise go out-of-district to another two-year college needs to be stressed in meetings with public officials, other college officials and the press. That NITI and the other colleges and universities of the region share a common problem -- that a disproportionately high percentage of students plan to leave the area to continue their education beyond high school -- should be an objective in a public information campaign.

31. NITI should involve its advisory committee members in the overall activities of the institution. When public events are scheduled at the college, advisory committee members should be invited and honored. Also, advisory committee members should regularly receive information about NITI programs and activities, not just those they advise.

32. NITI should target a general public information campaign toward increasing public understanding and awareness of NITI's role in providing local community personal development courses and activities, high school completion and GED programs, and special programs and support services for disabled students.

33. A section of the general boxholder mailer used to announce adult and continuing education should contain general information about the college. An ad hoc advisory committee comprised of adults who have taken such courses in local communities should advise NITI on the desired informational content of the mailer.

34. NITI should examine each program in relation to the identified group(s) interested in the program. Programs should be rank ordered by potential for development and enhancement. Those programs of interest to students planning to leave Merged Area I to attend another two-year college should receive the greatest priority. The relationship between the curriculum of these programs and those Career Option programs listed in a subsequent section should be explored.

35. Some programs have high enrollments but low demand, as indicated in this report. NITI should explore ways of better representing and publicizing those programs.

36. For those programs with low enrollments and low demand, as indicated in this report, NITI should consider reallocating program resources to other, higher demand areas.

37. NITI officials should make known to the four-year colleges and universities of the area the extent of student interest in continuing their education beyond their current NITI program.

38. NITI officials should confer with those colleges and universities of the area who may be interested in developing an articulated plan of transfer for NITI graduates wishing to continue their education and pursue a bachelors degree.

39. NITI faculty and instructional leaders should meet and confer with their academic counterparts at four-year colleges and universities in order to determine the desired content, method and purpose of each course that, through enhancement and revision, may be acceptable for transfer.

40. NITI officials should consult with academic leaders and faculty of other colleges and universities of the area in the development of a general education curriculum that will effectively articulate to those colleges and to the public universities of the state.

41. NITI instructional officials should examine the curricular preparation required for bachelors degree in each of the high demand subject areas and then discuss with nearby colleges and universities specific ways in NITI students could receive appropriate preparation for transfer and study in those subject areas.

42. A curriculum study team should be established to examine each of the high demand Career Option Program areas identified in this study. This team should be responsible for contacting each community college offering these programs, obtaining course descriptions and curriculum guides for each program, identifying the transfer and articulation arrangements for each of these programs, examining existing NITI courses which may be revised or enhanced to fulfill a role in these programs, and develop a plan to implement these Career Option Program.

43. From the ensuing plans for each Career Option Program, the instructional leaders of NITI can then evaluate and select those programs with the highest student demand, and the least amount of curricular revision and staffing changes.

44. NITI should establish a curriculum study committee to articulate a common set of general education goals and requirements for all associate degree students, for all certificate students, and for all diploma students.

45. NITI should explore the capabilities and qualifications of its faculty for providing transferable applied science and Career Option courses.

46. A goal of NITI staff development should be to regularly acquaint staff to the courses, activities, faculty, students and support personnel associated with each instructional program.

47. A rotating calendar of visitations to area high schools by NITI professional staff would increase articulation of secondary and postsecondary subjects.

48. A similar inservice program for high school teachers and counselors should improve their understanding of the variety of programs and services available to students who select NITI.

49. Joint discussions between high school and college staff of the results of the High School Senior Survey should assist in identifying those students most likely to be interested in the NITI programs and services.

50. Northeast Iowa Technical Institute should expand its mission to fulfill all functions of a comprehensive community college, as defined by Iowa statute.

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